

Roger and Viola Wachal Smith Conservation Area

Ten Year Area Management Plan FY 2013-2022



Lisa M. Allen
Forestry Division Chief

1-8-14
Date

Roger and Viola Wachal Smith Conservation Area
Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

Kent Korthas, Wildlife Management Biologist

Frank Drummond, Wildlife Biologist

Cory Gregg, Resource Forester

Scott Williams, Fisheries Management Biologist

Eric Niemeyer, Private Lands Private Lands Conservationist

Jason Vaughn, Conservation Agent

CENTRAL REGION

RCT Chair


Signature 12/23/2013 Date

FORESTRY DIVISION

Unit Chief


Signature 1-3-14 Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Roger and Viola Wachal Smith Conservation Area, #9337
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1993
- **Acreage:** 517 acres
- **County:** Moniteau and Cole
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statements of Purpose:**

The land donated to the Department was intended for the purpose of public hiking, hunting, camping and enjoying nature through recreational activities. Mrs. Young also wanted this land to remain for the purpose of providing wildlife habitat and forest based resources.

A. Strategic Direction

Restore woodland, glade and savanna communities. Maintain limited cropping in bottomland fields. Manage open land habitats for early successional wildlife species

B. Desired Future Condition

Viola Smith CA will be a good working example of how active management can be applied in order to restore grasslands and woodlands as well as improve water quality. It will illustrate to landowners and other constituents how timber stand improvement can provide healthier woods, increase mast production, and create a thriving habitat for all types of wildlife. Viola Smith CA will also give examples of how to reclaim old fields that are choked with early successional species, and turn them into thriving glades, woodlands, and savannas. Lastly, Viola Smith CA will show how agriculture and sustainable conservation practices can coexist and remain profitable. All of these features will provide delightful wildlife viewing, hiking, and hunting opportunities for the public to enjoy.

C. Federal Aid Statement

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Considerations

A. Priority Areas:

None

B. Natural Area:

None

II. Important Natural Features and Resources:

- A. Species of Conservation Concern:** None
- B. Caves:** None
- C. Springs:** None

III. Existing Infrastructure

- 7 pond dams
- 3 gravel parking lots
- 1.85 miles maintained area access trail
- Natural Gas Pipeline
- Fire line- periodically maintained hand line

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. Deed Restrictions:** None
- B. Federal Interest:** Federal funds may be used in the management of this land. Fish and wildlife agencies may not allow recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State is managing the land. Other uses may be acceptable and must be assessed in each specific situation.
- C. Easements:** Panhandle Eastern Pipeline's easement runs from the southeast corner through the central west boundary line. A rural electric cooperative easement provides power to a distribution panel used by Panhandle Eastern on the pipeline.
- D. Cultural Resources:** Yes, records kept with MDC Environmental Compliance Specialist. Managers should follow Best Management Practices for Cultural Resources found in the MDC Resource Policy Manual.
- E. Hazards and Hazardous wastes:** None observed.
- F. Endangered Species:** None observed.
- G. Boundary Issues:** None

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Control old field invasive species (fescue, locust, autumn olive, multiflora rose, cedar, ash, elm)
- 2) Reduce excessive tree stocking rates in glade, savanna, and woodland habitats
- 3) Expand grassland cover for nesting birds and small game
- 4) Manage agricultural crop land to meet wildlife and recreational needs

Management Objective 1: Remove 70 acres of cedar and other invasive woody plants from old fields in order to transition into glades, savannas, and woodlands that are dominated by favorable plant species.

Strategy 1: Conduct cedar sales where stand density, size class, and access is feasible.

Strategy 2: Use mechanical means (chainsaw, tree shear, and bull hog) to remove cedar, honey locust and other unacceptable growing stock.

Strategy 3: Utilize prescribe burning to remove slash, debris, and impede growth of early successional woody plants. Also, fire will likely stimulate glade/savanna natural community plants.

Strategy 4: Supplement seeding of native plants where diversity and quantity are deficient.

Management Objective 2: Actively manage the 380 acres of woodlands and forests on the area and monitor their overall health.

Strategy 1: Apply stand prescriptions recommended from the most recent inventory by harvesting, TSI, and prescribed burning where needed.

Strategy 2: Remain up to date on the inventory schedule to reassess forest and woodland conditions.

Strategy 3: Continually monitor the overall health of the forest to address any insect, disease or abiotic factors that may arise.

Management Objective 3: Control invasive species in old field habitats.

Strategy 1: Monitor old fields for encroaching sericea lespedeza, tall fescue, and autumn olive.

Strategy 2: Apply appropriate herbicides during the growing season in order to eradicate invasive plant species. Use foliar spray, prescribed fire and/or mechanical means to address woody invasives.

Management Objective 4: Manage 62 acres of agricultural crop fields to provide food and habitat for wildlife, as well as providing an example of how agriculture and conservation practices can coexist.

Strategy 1: Encourage permittee farmer to use sound farming practices that encourages wise nutrient management, reduced soil disturbance, and protects water quality.

Strategy 2: Explore opportunities to barter with the farmer in order to more efficiently accomplish other management objectives.

Strategy 3: Provide sufficient amounts of supplemental food for wildlife to sustain health during the winter months, as well as offering prime hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Strategy 4: Create open ground with light plant cover to provide habitat for small birds and animals to forage.

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Maintain area ponds for wildlife watering and semi-aquatic wildlife use.
- 2) Maintain a 50-foot wide forested riparian corridor along Turtle Spring Branch.

Management Objective 1: Maintain healthy ponds that support aquatic and terrestrial wildlife needs.

Strategy 1: Annually, visually monitor the health of the small ponds and address any prospective problems as needed.

Management Objective 2: Maintain a riparian corridor of trees along Turtle Spring Branch.

Strategy 1: Annually monitor the riparian buffer of Turtle Spring Branch in order to preserve water quality as a second order tributary to Little Moniteau Creek, which is a priority watershed for an endangered fish species. (MDC; A ten year strategic plan, 2010)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Create multiple use opportunities for the public.

Management Objective 1: Provide area users with compatible and inviting multiple use opportunities for recreation, education, and information.

Strategy 1: Maintain and expand current area trails for improved access and use by the public.

Strategy 2: Maintain accurate area information and regulations through the atlas database, area brochures, posted information, and staff contacts with area users.

Strategy 3: Promote compatible, safe uses for hunting, fishing, birding, hiking, camping, and nature photography.

Strategy 4: Monitor and document multiple use conflicts or concerns. Resolve or address these concerns by evaluating area regulations, season limitations, or special use permit options.

Strategy 5: Reexamine the lake feasibility study that was conducted in 2005 per the request from the original *Limited Area Plan of Roger V. & Viola Wachal*

Smith Conservation Area. (MDC; Area Plan, 1995) (MDC; Lake Plan, 2005)

Present the proposed lake plan to the RCT for reconsideration and discussion.

Strategy 6: Begin assessment of swapping out the northern parking lot on Bird Haven Rd. for a small parking lot on Bird Haven Road near the connecting point of the area access trail, to ensure safe parking for public users and MDC personnel.

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Continue good relations with neighboring landowners and easement holders.
- 2) Enforce area and state wide regulations.

Management Objective 1: Maintain area boundary lines to reduce conflict and confusion with neighboring landowners.

Strategy 1: Monitor area boundaries on a biannual basis to ensure proper signage is in place and no trespass issues have occurred.

Management Objective 2: Inform landowners and easement holders of any major management activities occurring on the area including timber harvests, prescribed burning, or other activities that may involve special permission.

Strategy 1: Contact landowners and easement holders via phone, mailing or word of mouth to inform them of any special activities occurring on the area.

Strategy 2: Respond to and address any concerns of unusual activity occurring on the area.

Management Objective 3: Monitor and administer area and state wide regulations to ensure public safety and gratification.

Strategy 1: Ensure all SUP users and contractors are following standards set within the contractual agreement, and confront any violations in a punctual manor.

Strategy 2: Work in cooperation with Conservation Agents and other law enforcement to enforce and investigate violations of the wildlife code and regulations.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22
Terrestrial Resources										
Objective 1										
Strategy 1	X									
Strategy 2	X	X	X	X						
Strategy 4	X	X	X	X						
Public Use										
Objective 1										
Strategy 5	X									
Strategy 6		X								
Administration										
Objective 1										
Strategy 1	X		X		X		X		X	

APPENDICES

Area Background:

In the past, this area was used mainly for agricultural purposes and for outdoor recreation. A good portion of the forest land was cleared, terraced and used for pasture or grassland. Some of the woodlands along the north and parts of the southeastern property line were not grazed heavily. Within the last 30-40 years, some of the pasture land has been left idle and has grown into second stage successional species such as cedar, locust, ash, elm, and other remnant oak species.

Current Land and Water Types

Land/Water Type	Acres	Feet	% of Area
Woodland/ Savanna/ Glade	335		65
Old Fields/Upland Fields	70		13
Cropland	62		12
Bottomland/Riparian Forest	47		9
Impounded Water & Streams	3		1
Total	517		100%
Stream Frontage (Turtle Spring Branch)		5,200	

Public Input Summary

The draft Roger and Viola Wachal Smith Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period August 1-August 31, 2013. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from one respondent (appendix A). The Viola Smith Area Planning Team carefully reviewed and considered these ideas as they finalized this document. A brief summary of public input themes – including how they were incorporated or why they were not can be found below. Rather than respond to each individual comment, comments are grouped into general themes and are addressed collectively.

MDC responses to themes and issues identified through Viola Smith public comment period**Would it be possible to add a parking lot at Birdhaven Road near the area access trail?**

This proposal is a very good recommendation and is supported by the Area Plan Team. This section of the access trail is used frequently by the public for hunting, hiking, and wildlife viewing, and serves as the primary access of the area for MDC staff for a variety of area management purposes. Parking on that stretch of Bird Haven Road is very unsafe, especially with larger equipment and trailers, due to poor visibility from oncoming traffic. Cole County Public Works has also requested a parking lot in that area to provide a safe place for their road graders and other equipment to turn around and park for road maintenance. An assessment will be conducted for removing the existing north parking lot on Bird Haven Road in exchange for this proposed parking lot near the connector of Bird Haven Road and the area access trail.

Would it be possible to add a pit toilet near Pea Ridge Road?

A pit toilet was decided to be unnecessary due to low overall use to this area, particularly in that parking lot. A privy requires a large amount of maintenance and upkeep, which was determined not feasible for the amount of use expected.

Would it be possible to add primitive camping sites?

Primitive walk-in camping is already allowed on the area, so no change is needed for this request. The area gets very little over-night use, so adding designated camping sites is not feasible considering the increase maintenance that would be required.

References:

MDC. (1995). *1995 Roger V. & Viola Wachal Smith CA Limited Area Plan*. Jefferson City: Missouri Department of Conservation.

MDC. (n.d.). *Natural Heritage database*. Jefferson City: Missouri Department of Conservation.

MDC. (2010). A Ten Year Strategic Plan for the Recovery of the Topeka Shiner in Missouri. Jefferson City: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Nigh, T. A., & Schroeder, W. A. (2002). *Atlas of Missouri ecoregions*. Jefferson City: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Williams, S. (2005). *Proposed Lake Plan for Viola Smith CA*. California, MO: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A: Draft Roger and Viola Wachal Smith Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Habitat Map

Figure 3: Area Infrastructure Map

Appendix A. Draft Roger and Viola Wachal Smith Conservation Area Management Plan

Public Comments

Received during public comment period (August 1-31, 2013).

Please consider adding a parking lot on birdhaven - at top of grade at county line for drainage purposes - near the termination of the "access trail". Folks park along the road during seasons and sometimes don't do a very good job. I wouldn't think a huge lot would be required, nothing like the others on birdhaven. We've seen 4 vehicles parked along the road and generally block the access trail entrance - (no parking signs there ?)

perhaps a pit toilet at parking lot near Pea Ridge?

primitive camping sites as well as on parking lot?

Figure 1: Area Map

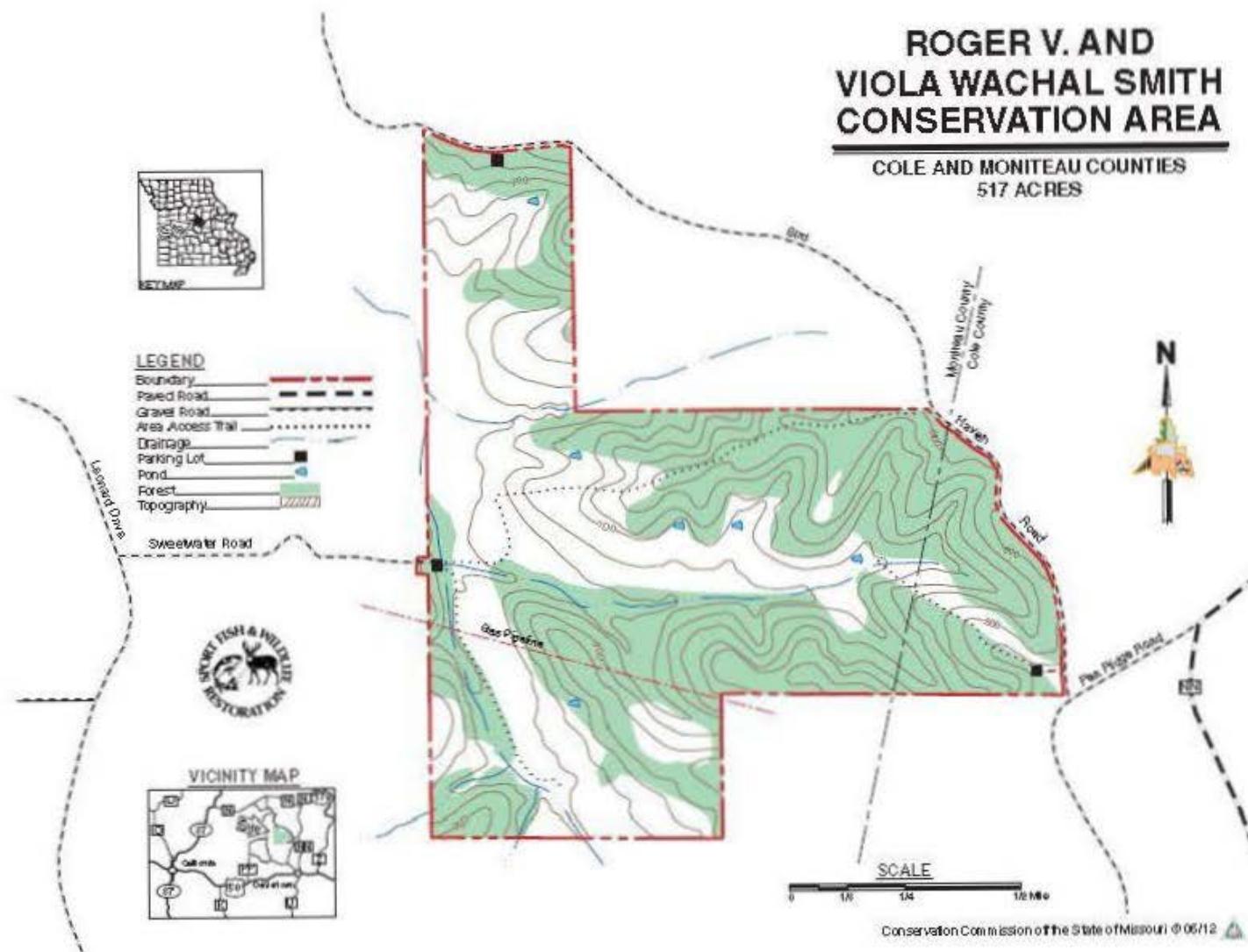


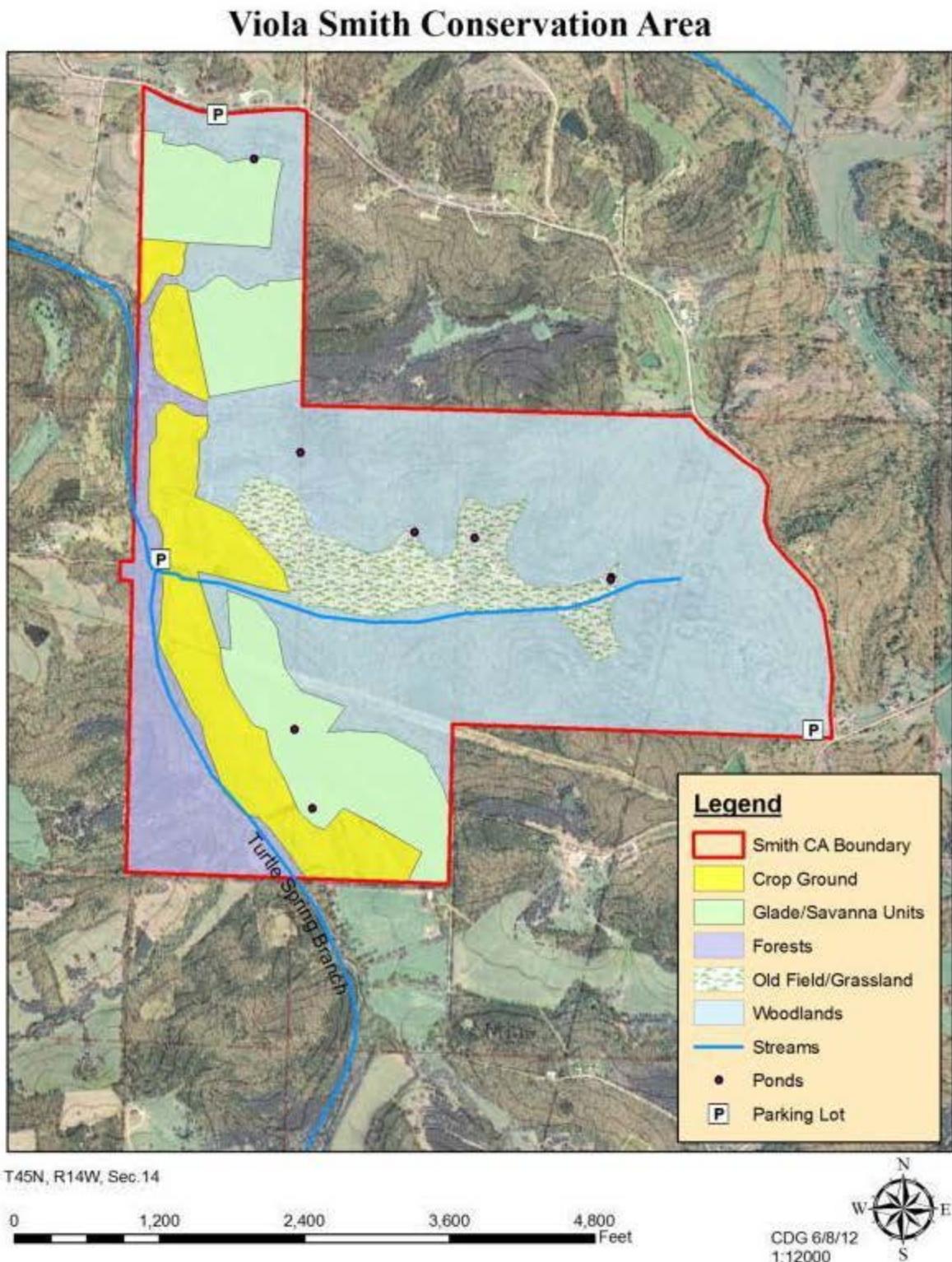
Figure 2: Habitat Map

Figure 3: Area Infrastructure Map